

# **Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Administration Committee**

## **Final Meeting Summary** *Approved November 19, 1999*

**October 14, 1999**

**Present:** Doug Hurley, Chair, Peter Bennett, Vice Chair, Greg Devereux, Bob Dilger, Representative Ruth Fisher, Tomio Moriguchi, Connie Niva, Patricia Notter, Senator Dino Rossi, Randy Scott, Judie Stanton

**Absent:** Ken Smith

**Others in Attendance:** Allan Giffen (City of Everett), Lynn Kohn (Association of Washington Cities), Jack Locke (City of Auburn), Susan Mueller (City of Seattle), Chris Rose (Washington State Transportation Commission), Duke Schaub (Associated General Contractors of Washington), Betty Spieth (Washington Transportation Alliance), Scott Taylor (Washington Public Ports Association)

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The Committee approved the summary of the August 20th meeting as drafted.

The Chair explained that since the September retreat, the Steering Committee had agreed that rather than reaching final recommendations in May 2000, the Commission would develop policy options and engage the public in a broad discussion of the issues and the options. After the extensive public outreach, the Commission will deliver its recommendations in December 2000, before the 2001 Legislative session begins.

### **Committee Review of Preliminary Findings**

The Committee reviewed the preliminary findings document that reflected revisions since the September retreat. A new environmental finding was presented and agreed upon, and three minor amendments were made to the Administration Committee findings. The Chair was to present these revised findings at the full Commission meeting that followed the Administration Committee meeting.

## **Public Opinion Research Findings**

Rick Cocker of Cocker Fennessy and the Commission's communications staff presented the findings of recent public opinion research on transportation issues, including a telephone survey that the BRCT commissioned. From August 19 to 23, Moore Information conducted a survey of 800 registered voters. Looking at the questions most relevant to Administration Committee issues, 78 percent of those polled agreed that if the government did a better job of managing our tax dollars, they could find enough money for transportation improvements without increasing taxes. When respondents were asked about items that might improve the transportation system, items that ranked high included making the Washington State Department of Transportation more efficient, better coordination among local and state agencies, and doing a better job of setting priorities for transportation projects.

Generally, the closer the perceived connection between the service and the public, the higher the service was rated. For example, the ferry system was viewed more favorably than WSDOT. People also appeared more willing to support specific service improvements.

Core themes that emerged from the poll results included the following: (1) voters need assurances that money is being spent wisely, that agencies are coordinating, and that projects are prioritized; (2) safety and maintenance are top concerns; and (3) the state population is growing rapidly and if nothing is done, the transportation system will be overwhelmed.

Rick Cocker noted that in a separate survey conducted by Sound Transit of 1875 people, 68 percent said that funds should be spent where the problems are the greatest, and not necessarily to give their community a fair share. But Committee members agreed that people do want to know what tangible project is occurring in their neighborhood or where they drive, in order for them to have confidence in the transportation system. Comparisons were made to other capital campaigns, such as the recent Seattle public library bond, which provided funds not only for the badly needed central library but also for all the neighborhood libraries; another example is the Vancouver, Washington, school district levy, which allocated funds to all the schools in the district.

The Chair observed that it is hard to know what will cause people to believe their government is efficient and how best to shed light on efficiency issues. The perceived detachment from government does not help, and he questioned how we can instill a sense of personal engagement – the equivalent of a community roof-raising – for transportation improvements.

The Committee agreed that a one-size-fits-all message will not work. Congestion is more of a concern in Western Washington than in Eastern Washington, for example. We need both roads and transit, and a wide spectrum of people must reinforce the need for transportation improvements.

## **Moving from Findings to Policy Options**

The Chair noted that as the Commission moves from findings to policy options, it is useful to evaluate options against established criteria. The Committee reviewed the evaluative criteria developed in earlier meetings and made some revisions. The revised criteria are attached to these minutes.

In the remainder of the meeting, the Committee considered what options it might consider in the area of governance. The status quo is always an option. The Chair observed that Sound Transit is an agency that can plan, fund, and implement transit projects. In the Puget Sound area, to take one example, there will never be sufficient revenues to fund all the desired transportation improvements, and decision-making is fragmented among a large number of jurisdictions. There seems to be a need for a county-wide body, or a multi-county body, with the capability of planning, funding, and implementing projects.

The Chair asked the Committee to brainstorm where such a regional body could be housed. Existing governmental entities that could be considered to fill this role in the King County region include King County itself; the Puget Sound Regional Council; the Growth Management Planning Council, which has both the King County Executive and city representation; and the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit), if “Transit” were changed to “Transportation.” The Transportation Improvement Board was suggested as another body to consider.

In other parts of the state, such as Spokane and Clark County, the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) generally work well, but this is largely because they are often single-county organizations. We need tools that are applicable to different parts of the state.

The Committee agreed that those with the dollars make the policy. The 1988 Road Jurisdiction Study named the state, counties, and local jurisdictions responsible for particular roads. But the state does not have sufficient resources to cover the roads it owns. Perhaps some roads, such as SR-169 and SR-513, should go into local hands. The local governments, whether city or county, would then need a way to fund those roads.

## **Next Meeting**

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for **Friday, November 19, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.**, in the SeaTac Room on the 12th floor of the SeaTac Holiday Inn.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.